

SHIEN Shared Solutions Workshop Report

10th December 2009, Salvation Army Citadel, Aberdeen

Aims of the day:

The Scottish Homelessness Involvement and Empowerment (SHIEN) Shared Solutions Workshop focused on best practice in involvement and empowerment.

The objectives for the day were to:

- raise awareness of SHIEN;
- share perspectives and understanding of service user involvement;
- share best practice in service user involvement and empowerment.

Format of the day:

The Shared Solutions process is an innovative approach to events that has been used successfully by Glasgow Homelessness Network in the past. It is a collaborative approach bringing together all key stakeholders in homelessness (service planners, managers, frontline staff, policy makers and service users) as equal stakeholders in the process of identifying potential solutions to key issues.

After an introduction and presentation outlining the objectives of SHIEN and the aims of the day, the delegates warmly received three panel discussions.

Each panel discussion put forward perspectives on service user involvement. Each considered the benefits and the challenges to service user involvement (for example, what is good about service user involvement, and what doesn't work so well or could be improved).

Each panel comprised of two or more members from the following three perspectives:

1. Service Users who had experience in service user involvement activity.
2. Front-line staff who had worked directly with service users in an involvement activity.
3. Policy makers who influence policy at either Scottish Government, local council or in the voluntary sector.

Following each of the panel discussions, small round table discussions gave delegates the opportunity to input to the day. The discussions were led by the following questions, and a summary of delegate responses are noted throughout the report.

1. Do we have similar experiences as those of the panel members?
2. What were the challenges discussed?
3. What would have improved the service user involvement and participation discussed?
4. Is there anything from the discussions we would like to highlight?

The afternoon sessions welcomed 'service user champions' leading on workshop-style discussions.

The day closed with a quiz, made up of both 'fun' and 'learning' questions.



Panel Discussions

We were privileged to have very experienced service user involvement champions on each of our panels. Each very obviously had a wealth of experience to share. The following provides a brief summary of the discussion and highlights inspiring and innovative service user involvement activities.

Service User Panel

Peter McCleod-Young Single Persons Housing Project. Service users designed a young persons booklet, which is very professional, artistic and well laid out, Peter brought the booklet to share with delegates. The booklet highlights information about the project including access, what the project offers and service user rights.

Peter also informed the group that he's a Scottish rapper and he has an album coming out that will be publicised by the council and proceeds will go toward supporting the young people's project and other charities.

Darrah Johnston- Informed the group about Margaret House and shared that it is an excellent project that has really helped him. He highlighted that Margaret House has weekly residents meetings and staff take notes of what is said and that most of the residents of the project come along to this meeting.

Round table discussions around Service User Perspective Panel

Some of the challenges highlighted through discussion were:

- Sometimes we get so tied up in policies and procedures that we miss the simple solutions.
- Opening opportunities with the most difficult to engage with young people.

Some of the suggested improvements were:

- More consistency through and between services provided.
- It would be good to use different kinds of service user involvement so that as many people as possible are able to access these opportunities.
- Preventative work in schools, highlighting and raising awareness of young peoples issues.
- Raising awareness of support services available.

The following points were highlighted:

- Everyone is aiming for the same thing.
- It's really important to involve service users particularly around times of change to services.
- All service user should be recognized for there individuality and be given respect.
- Good news is not always shared, we need to highlight the positive more!

Practitioner Panel

Gill Harper - Young peoples (16-18) project Cyrenians. Gail highlighted that the Cyrenians place a great deal of importance on service user involvement and empowerment and ensure it is threaded throughout the service. Some innovative examples of this are:- the residential project has an Agenda Book, which is open all month so that anyone can add in items for the monthly agenda for residents meeting at any time. In addition, residents are encouraged to contribute to their own day notes.

There is an arts project and it has a permanent large rolled out sheet of paper on the wall, with paints, pencils and pens for contributing too. Gail recommended putting only minimal restrictions in place with this, for example, around respect for residents and staff and not making issues personal.

Ruth Ogilvie—Mental Health (Adults) Cyrenians. Ruth discussed residents meetings that are held over breakfast time because that's when most people are congregated in an area. Respect is emphasized and recognition that this is people's home, making sure there are opportunities for lots of influence over physical environment, and also informs all parts of the project and influences policy.



Panel Discussions (continued)



Angus McCurrach - Drugs Action. A number of key areas and suggestions were highlighted from the service user involvement activity carried out by Drugs Action:

- Always giving feedback to service users;
- Encouraging active and joint working;
- Various ways need to be employed in order to pick up service user involvement intelligence, as Drugs Actions client group are quite transient he recommended Comments books and Drop-ins.
- Angus highlighted the need to work on stigmas and attitudes of those in the community, particularly those providing health services.

Round table discussions around Practitioner Perspective Panel

Some of the challenges highlighted through discussion were:

- Acknowledgement that community based work may be more difficult to implement service user involvement than in residential services.
- Funding issues – service outcomes are not set around service user needs/requirements. For this reason it may be argued that service creativity is being stifled.
- Geography and resources makes engagement difficult in more rural areas.
- There is possibly a lack of knowledge around what service user involvement is and its benefits.

Some of the suggested improvements were:

- Many recognized the need for better feedback to service user regarding their views, thoughts and requests.
- More buy in from management and frontline staff to implement and assess service user involvement.
- Meetings developed and organised by tenants/ service users work really well particularly if this includes developing agendas, chairing and note taking (and related training and support provided).

The following points were also highlighted:

- Accept that not all service users will want to get involved, and involve only to the level that suits the individual concerned.
- Independent evaluation of activities is recommended.
- The need to work on stigmas and attitudes of those in the community, especially those providing services.

Policy Panel

Paul Hannon- Aberdeen City Council. Paul is new to post, but plans to speak to service users regarding developing council action plans. He talked about the service user strategy within the council which he supports and will be working on.

Audrey Johnson- Aberdeenshire Council. Spoke passionately about the benefits of service user involvement, as services should be designed to fit the need of those who use them. Audrey identified several barriers to service user involvement in Aberdeenshire including:- Lack of resources and geographical spread over such a large area making it engaging with 'hard to reach' clients difficult. Service user involvement in homeless strategy and action planning was also discussed.

Jane Fullerton- Cyrenians. Jane emphasized the importance of service user involvement at the Cyrenians, and acknowledged that although it threads through all work, and has done for some time, there has recently been recognition that improvements needed to be made to evidence work.

There is now a service user activity folder in every Cyrenian project, and participation is monitored. Areas highlighted included:

- Links to care commission standards, service user involvement on agendas in management and staff meetings and on support and supervision templates;
- Service users generating policies within projects;
- MAIN (Must Address Inclusion Needs) a system she has been using to ensure service user involvement in all areas of work.





Round table discussions around Policy Perspective Panel

Some of the challenges highlighted through discussion were:

- A joined up approach across Aberdeenshire and surrounding areas.
- Getting people to come along to events.
- Funding authorities – as separate, this is a boundary to access.
- Implementation of policy at delivery level.

Some of the suggested improvements were:

- Aberdeenshire Live is a big screen with information on services, which is based in community areas, within leisure centres, libraries etc. It was suggested that service user involvement opportunities could be advertised on the screen.
- Use community services/ groups/ centres.
- Look at examples of best practice in addressing geographical barriers, for example Highlands and Islands.
- More interaction between service users, managers and policy makers using a central discussion point – online, e.g. new SHIEN website.

The following points were highlighted:

- Recognize the importance of networking opportunities.
- Keep the momentum of good practice going, e.g. take actions forward from this workshop.



Best Practice Workshops



The following delegates kindly offered in advance of the event to facilitate workshops designed to share best practice and learning around service user involvement activities they had carried out in the past, or are currently facilitating.

Facilitators	Organisation	Topic
Maureen Patterson/Ruth Ogilvie	Cyrenians	Recruitment
Rita Buchan/Carol Hannaford	Aberdeen Council	Tenant Service Review
Charlie Lynch	Aberdeen City Council	Media and Newsletters
Brenda Bathgate	Salvation Army	Residents Meeting

Discussions:

All workshop facilitators worked to a prepared format in which they recorded their name, project, capacity, and presented a brief outline of the organisation/ project and service user involvement activity to their workshop group.

The workshop group then contributed to sharing successes, recognising the positive aspects of the activities and suggesting improvements and sharing learning for future activities.

Each workshop was attended by delegates from different organisations/ areas of work and with differing levels of experience. This led to a great width of discussion around shared experience and suggestions for learning and improvements for future activities.

Each group then fed back to the whole room, sharing knowledge from each of the four workshops.





A Taster of the Workshops

Tenant Service Review – Aberdeen City Council.

Aberdeen City Council set up a Tenant Service Review, as part of an overall review of council services. As part of the project, tenant volunteers were involved in activities such as Mystery Shopping to inspect the authority's approach to customer service, and carrying out peer research, by filling out questionnaires with other tenants. The pilot and subsequent activity has been supported by Aberdeen City Council, Tenant Participation Advisory Service, and received funding from Communities Scotland.

The positive aspects of this activity were:

- It raised the profile of tenant participation, encouraging tenants to get involved in their service.
- Training was given to the tenant volunteers, which helped build their personal skills.

One tenant volunteer stated that 'it's not just customer care, it is customers taking care of their services'.

Media and Newsletters—Aberdeen City Council

The Young Single Persons Housing Project, which was presented during the Service User Perspective Panel, was further discussed from a staff perspective, highlighting the need for funding, partnership working, and motivating young people to get involved.

A publication was produced by residents to let other residents know about the services they could access. The opportunity to get involved was open to all residents, and continuing opportunities to those coming into the service. The publication has been produced with service users in mind, by service users and is therefore very accessible and relevant.

The booklet is accessible on the council's website, and also in a high quality glossy booklet, which is given to young people as part of the induction to the project.

Staff Recruitment—Cyrenians

Service user involvement in the recruitment of staff is one of the several opportunities for tenants to become involved in the services offered in Cyrenian projects. The following were highlighted through discussion as positive aspects of the process:

- Training for those who wished to be involved, helping them build skills.
- There was direct input of issues relevant to service users into the process.
- The active involvement of service users in a decision that would affect the day to day running of their service.

Residents' Meetings—Salvation Army

Residents' meetings within the project are chaired by a resident who has volunteered to take on this role, and receives support from staff members who are also involved in the meetings. The following points were highlighted:

- It is easier to get more people when gathered for an activity, e.g. meals, TV, bingo.
- Feedback given on matters arising at last meeting – if no action taken, explain why not.
- People have the opportunity to put items on the agenda.
- In a stop over project, chaotic lifestyles mean that residents' meetings may not be well attended, or have regular attendance by the same people.

Further notes on the workshops and discussions can be found on the SHIEN website: www.ghn.org.uk/shien

Conference Evaluation

The workshop received great feedback, out of the 38 delegates in attendance, 15 completed evaluation forms (15 forms returned).

7 of the delegates reported representing the voluntary sector, and 5 represented the statutory sector, 3 delegates ticked 'other'.

Delegates were asked to rate the event on a scale of 1(poor) to 5 (excellent) 13 of the delegates rated the event a '4', one rated a '3' and one rated a '5'.

'Very enjoyable and informative, good to hear different experiences'

'The event was well paced. Good use of resources, skills and knowledge available'

'Found all of it useful and inspiring, will go back with many new ideas, find it good to be reminded how participation can benefit a service.'

'I liked learning from other organisations how they approach service user Involvement'

'Will check out your new website and get additional information there'

'It was a good window into other service providers' work'

'Excellent day, I really enjoy the events run by SHIEN'

We aim to make this report as widely available as possible to staff and service users of services. If you require further copies, or would like more information about SHIEN please get in contact:

You can visit our website at www.ghn.org.uk/shien

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